

BENCH-BAR-MEDIA CONFERENCE

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 12, 1998 MEETING

The Bench-Bar-Media Conference convened on November 12, 1998 at the offices of the *News Journal* near New Castle at 12:00 noon. The meeting was open to the public.

Present were:

Members from the Bench

Judge Henry duPont Ridgely

Judge John K. Welch

Members from the Bar

Richard D. Kirk

Members from the Print Media

Rita Farrell

John H. Taylor, Jr.

Jane Amari

Randell Beck (alternate member)

Members from the Electronic Media

Cindy Balan (for Bill Osborne)

Excused absences were Vice Chancellor Jack B. Jacobs, Judge Vincent J. Poppiti, Judge Roderick R. McKelvie, Eugene H. Bayard, Charles Brandt, and James Flood.

Also present were Richard K. Herrmann, Esquire of Blank Rome Comisky & McCauley, and Andrew Jefferson, Esquire and Fleet Davis of AmeriStar Technologies, Inc., and W. Curtis Riddell, publisher of the *News Journal*.

1. Minutes of October 1, 1998

The members approved minutes of the meeting held on October 1, 1998, which were distributed in draft with the agenda. A copy will be sent to the repository.

2. Officers for next year

By custom, the print media are to nominate the Vice Chair for the coming year, who will become Chair the year after. The nomination of Jim Flood of the Dover Post was duly made, seconded and unanimously approved.

3. Presentation on Courtroom 21

Richard K. Herrmann, chair of the Bar Association's Computer Law Section, and Andrew Jefferson and Fleet Davis of AmeriStar Technology, Inc., gave a presentation on the Courtroom 21 project. Superior Court needs additional courtroom space and will lease commercial space at One Rodney Square for that purpose. The Computer Law Section, with assistance from AmeriStar, the State's computer network vendor, will fit the courtroom out as the courtroom of the future. The courtroom will be used for civil trials until the new New Castle County Courthouse is built. The project offers the bench, the bar, the media and the public with good opportunities for experimenting with and commenting on new technologies for presenting, observing and preserving evidence at trials. Rita Farrell raised important concerns about seeking public input regarding changes in technology. The members also noted that the Courtroom 21 project may afford the kind of controlled experiment for cameras in the courtroom we have long been looking for. The television media representatives were urged to discuss this opportunity.

4. High Profile Trials

The members noted that press coverage related to the Capano trial has been smooth. Judge Ridgely noted that no Superior Court Judge had mentioned any media related problem to him.

5. Old Business

- a. The Internet Seminar will be held on April 30 in the State Office Building. The Conference will co-sponsor with the Computer Law and Intellectual Property Law Sections of the Bar Association.
- b. The Bar Association will establish a special committee to give input on design issues for the new courthouse. Dick Kirk will be appointed, and the Conference agreed that we should ask that Bill Osborne be appointed to represent media interests.
- c. Bill Osborne is working on getting a representative from Channel 2 News. A new weekly directed at the law business, Delaware Law Weekly, was discussed. A representative will be invited to attend a future meeting to observe.

6. New Business

No new business was introduced.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on January 14, 1999 at 12:30 p.m. at the Supreme Court Conference Room in Wilmington, with videoconferencing available in Kent and Sussex Counties.

After thanking the *News Journal*, the host organization, the members adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:45 p.m.